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## Texas man kills ex-governor's son, fires AK-47 at cops Granger unloaded 30-plus rounds into the armored truck before a sniper shot him dead

By Avi Selk and Erin Amburgey-Sood  
Dallas Morning News

TYLER, Texas — Howard Tod Granger was surrounded.

**Lenco BearCat G3** at his front gate, sheriff at the back, helicopter in the sky, and a sniper in the yard.

The body was buried in his shed: Benjamin Gill Clements, former governor's son, millionaire from Dallas.

Clements, 69, purchased tracts of land like other men bought cattle. Granger's five acres in Henderson County had been surrounded by the retired CEO's metal fences, private lakes and planted pines for years before the police encircled Granger on Oct. 22.

That afternoon, the law called out for Granger. He stepped out of his little blue house and answered with an AK-47.

Police say Granger unloaded 30-plus rounds into the **Lenco BearCat G3** before a sniper shot him dead. And sometime between the first bullet and the last, they heard him scream what likely were his last words.

"I'm not going to sell my land!"

More than a week after the shootout, authorities still don't know why Clements turned up dead in Granger's yard. There had been rumors of conflict between the men for years, but no proof. Interviews reveal that Granger, a quiet and reclusive man, had become increasingly fearful that Clements was part of a conspiracy to kill him and take his property.

### Clements' holdings

The way you tell Clements' land is by the pine trees. They grow all over his thousand-acre property, a vacation ranch a few miles outside of Athens, in East Texas.



*The killer fired more than 35 rounds at the **Lenco Bearcat G3***

In the south, on the first tracts he bought around 2000, the trees he loved to walk among stand thick and tall. Some sit like giant reeds in the lake he built.

In the north, upon his newest acquisitions, younger pines stare across cracked asphalt and dusty driveways at the few houses, trailers, junk heaps and pasturelands that Clements didn't buy.

And between north and south, at the dead end of a county road that punctures Clements' vast estate, Granger's five acres sit like a puddle in the middle of a forest.

Starting about 10 years ago, Clements had bought up all the land to Granger's south and east, a few years later to his north, and finally his neighbor on the west.

In Granger's harrowed mind, his brother says, Clements would have killed him for his five acres.

### **'A Strange Guy'**

Granger, 46, was a quiet man - "strange," many neighbors say.

Authorities say he had no criminal record, and there were no records of previous calls to his home.

He used to work delivering auto parts in Athens, but in recent years had stayed home while his wife of nearly 16 years, Terri Lynch Granger, brought the paychecks. One woman remembers him as a good neighbor who would clear brush from her road and check in on her safety, but almost never came inside her house.

Other neighbors say they had met Granger only a few times in a decade, at times glaring with his AK-47 when they strayed too close to his fence line.

"That old boy, he was a strange guy," says John Laster, a longtime neighbor who wouldn't let his grandkids play on Granger's end of the road. "You'd be afraid to say good morning to him."

To relatives, Granger was a simple, private man - a Christian who liked nothing more than reading the Bible and skeet shooting.

Among the private clubs and gated mansions across the highway, he was known as a "sasquatch legend," the recluse at the end of the road.

But few really knew the man in the little blue house.

### **'Had to be something'**

Cobwebs hang in the branches above Granger's home of 18 years, where he lived with his wife and raised a son from a previous marriage.

It's barely a cottage, surrounded by barbed wire and "No Trespassing" signs - dwarfed by Clements' pines across the road.

Granger's brother and a neighbor say Clements offered \$50,000 for the property a few years back, as the retired oil executive was expanding his estate north from the lake, buying out Granger's neighbors left and right.

The price would have been above market value, but Granger always said he refused to sell - and his brother says that Clements began to hound him for it.

Clements' friends and family deny that.

"Gill never mentioned this to me. Ever," says Bubba Woods, one of Clements' closest friends.

Former Texas Gov. Bill Clements Jr., 93, says his son had no social contact with Granger whatsoever. Attempts to reach Bill Clements III, Gill Clements' son, were unsuccessful.

Even the county's top lawman is unsure what escalated things between the men.

"There had to be something between Granger and Mr. Clements that brought this on," says Ray Nutt, Henderson County sheriff and a former Texas Ranger who worked with the elder Clements while he was governor. "We don't know what that is. Hopefully someday we will know."

And in the absence of fact, rumors of some deep conflict between the two men have spread across the tiny neighborhood at the fringe of Clements' estate.

Some say Granger, who liked to shoot targets at night, had killed a deer on Clements' land. Others say Clements had made a rude joke about Granger's wife.

'Klan' conspiracy

But even the locals' wildest rumors pale against what Granger believed.

Across State Highway 19 from Clements' lake, where the pines and long-bricked farm houses give way to larger homes, there is a storied fishing club where, since the turn of the last century, some of Texas' richest families have kept a residence. The Clementses are one such family.

This place is now called Coon Creek Club, but into the 1990s newspaper articles would still refer to it by the old spelling: Koon Kreek Klub. Unfounded rumors of ties to the Ku Klux Klan still exist in some parts because of the name.

About a year ago, Granger began to tell his family that not just Clements, but "the Klan" was trying to take his land.

He eventually came to believe that even the sheriff was involved in the conspiracy.

Granger, who as a boy in Kemp needed his older brother to fight his fights, and who sometimes liked to dress in rings and a bolo tie, began to wear a flak jacket.

"I hadn't seen my brother in a year," says Richard Granger, "because he wouldn't leave his property for fear someone would burn his house down.

"He felt someone was going to drive by and shoot him."

This was the year that neighbors say they began to meet Granger and his gun at his fence line - the year that, according to his family, he told his wife that he loved her and that "they're going to kill me soon."

A week later, Gill Clements disappeared.

## The last day

On a sunny October morning, Granger drove off his last visitor, an officer looking for Clements.

The previous evening, Clements' SUV had been found - keys in the ignition - parked next to Granger's back gate. Police had searched the surrounding pines the whole night through.

Then three officers on horseback met Granger from across his fence line. Granger allegedly pointed his AK-47 at them and told them to leave.

They did, and for a few hours all was quiet inside Granger's fence line.

At some point that day, a truck dropped off a mattress.

At some point, Granger prayed with his wife.

And then they came at last - with warrants, guns and gas canisters, by **Lenco BearCat G3** and helicopter. They came from the north, the south, the west, and there was nothing in the world that Howard Tod Granger could do to keep them off his land.



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## Texas cops fired on with AK-47, saved by BearCat

The SWAT commander says there is no doubt the vehicle saved lives that day

Breaking Police News  
with Justin Cox

TYLER, Texas — A murderer fired more than 35 rounds from an AK-47 on cops in Tyler, Texas last month. Thanks to a recently purchased **Lenco BearCat** police vehicle, not one of the officers was killed, or even injured.

The killer fired more than 35 rounds at the **Lenco Bearcat G3**.

The officers were investigating the house of Howard Granger, a suspect in the murder of Benjamin Gill Clements – the son of a former Texas governor.

When cops arrived, Granger opened fire on them, unloading 36 rounds into the **Lenco BearCat G3**. A sniper killed him with one shot shortly after and Clement's body was found in a shallow grave on his property.

The vehicle, a **Lenco BearCat G3**, had only 500 miles on it at the time and was a controversial purchase in the community prior to the incident. Some accused the department of spending too much on "something that will never get used," according to Tyler PD SWAT Commander Rusty Jacks.



*The killer fired more than 35 rounds at the **Lenco Bearcat G3***

He says there is no doubt the vehicle saved lives that day.

"It allowed officers to approach the residence safely and protected them under heavy fire from a very high-powered rifle," he said.